Informant: **LMP-S12** **English**
Date: **11-2-01** **Mini DV**

Transcriber: **J. Dominguez**

(hard to hear what they are saying)

MJ: Did we talk about 'rue' (ruda)?

S12: We've been talking off and on with it but we can go on, so we spoke about, 'wolf's bane' (árnica), we stopped there, so we getting on '' (apazote) it's listed here, (epazote), (apazote) and in the Caribbean it's (pazote). That herb is good for parasites and also for all kinds of intestinal problems, not only parasites but also to help cleanse the intestines, that's very important. As a tea, and also you can do for inflammation of the stomach use as a pulp, also it's good for cooking, you can use it when you cook beans and also for, you can added to meat as a condiment

MJ: What flavor?

S12: I really don't use it as much, I know that it is used like that, I use it a couple of times to see what it does, it really doesn't do that much, it doesn't add anything or take anything, so I don't know why use it in cooking, but I do know that people use it a lot, especially…but if you figure out that the plant is used for intestinal problems and stuff like that, if you're cooking for example meat and stuff like that, you know what I mean, especially outside, I figure it would be a good way in case you get some kind of strange bug, by adding it to the food it's just, you know, my guess, because I don't know, it doesn't change anything

MJ: INAUDIBLE

S12: Yes, I recommended it for inflammations or like stomach inflammations on poultices and stuff like that, yes, but for cooking I tried it a couple of times because I have a lot of (epazote) but, you know there is no great culinary secret by using it so I just . . .

MJ: Stomach inflammation that's internal…

S12: It's internal…

MJ: …???

S12: If it's muscular, like in the stomach area, if you have some kind of inflammation of these muscles here, you know, sometimes people complain about that and it's not the stomach, the organ proper, but it's the muscles that you have there.

MJ: How do you prepare the poultice?

S12: Usually you bruise it [epasote], mortar and pestle and then add a little bit of rum to help liberate the chlorophyll and then apply it, you can apply it and then put a towel or something to hold it there, some people I know that they might heat it a little bit, they might put it…warm it up, I don't, I just apply it like that, usually when you warm that type of maceration you lose a lot of essential oils, that is very volatile, so as soon as you warm it it's gone

MJ: INAUDIBLE

S12: Well usually, as a rule of thumb, I keep like you know, 15 to half an hour and then just remove it and if you need to reapply, you apply a fresh one, because the body heat will help absorb, so you know, more than that I don't see any reason for it because by that time if you have the person laid down, quiet, nice, the body will absorb the elements of the plants, you know, ½ hour will be quite all right, it's like for example the poultice that I make with coffee leaves and camphor and sky blue (vencedor), which is a tree that is used for muscular pains, arthritic pain, it's very good, I use it very well with people who have arthritic pain.

MJ: INAUDIBLE

S12: (vencedor) is a tree, we have it down there, in English it's called sky blue

MJ: INAUDIBLE

S12: VENCEDOR, it's a very aromatic tree and very strong

MJ: INAUDIBLE

S12: With coffee, no we haven't talked about it, because the problem is that for that you need the coffee too and I'm lucky I have my own coffee tree, I have two of them, so I usually don't use it that much because then I will have to kill the tree, so, but I use it with very good results, very, very good results, last time I use it was with [his wife], because [his wife] has arthritis and I used it with her and someway it lowered the inflammation of the joints and you know, it's obvious that if the grain, the bean is so loaded with all kind of stuff, caffeine and all kind of stuff you can imagine the leaf, so…

MJ:???

S12: The leaf, yeah

MJ: ???, that's also a leaf?

S12: That's a tree

MJ: ???

S12: it's camphor

MJ: ???

S12: Yeah

MJ: ???

S12: Macerated, and put in a little bit of rum just to make it move faster and then apply it with a towel and then leave it there for ½ an hour then you apply it, you can massage a little bit but lightly just to get the muscle active and then you let the person hold it there for a half hour

MJ: And then you re-apply later?

S12: And then you keep reapplying as you go usually, it's very good, very effective, I was very surprised, the times that I've been using it. I had a gentleman here, he was complaining about lower back pain and he was going to a chiropractor and stuff like that and it wasn't doing anything, and I applied two treatments and he's fine, it worked fine. Apparently what it does, it's going to loosen up the muscle and reduce the inflammation. I don't know what it does, I just know that it makes, the person is able to move freely without having the very intense pain so it does something to the muscles and to the joints, I don't know what it does it just works

MJ: ???

S12: Yeah, and that's what my business is about, it works…that's what I say, I'm not a doctor, usually what we do is, both of us, is that when people come here with a complaint and we treat it, we always send them to see the doctor, never to stop the medication because that's not our business we are not doctors, we are just using remedies and stuff like that, and usually, the experience show us that they are usually taken off the treatment or the treatment is downgraded…

MJ: ???

S12: Arthritis, it works very fine

MJ: ??? ???

S12: No, it's useless to store it because if you can not freeze it, you can not…I don't have a machine that vacuum seals, well I do, but not for that and it's useless, so when I need to do something I just go cut my leaves and use it fresh from the trees, so his treatment is prepared right there, unless it's out of season that the plant, for example, winter is coming so you have to start pruning and then drying them up in the basement and then we dry it and we keep them dry and we dehydrate them, I could show you some of them that we have, they are ready to use, so during the winter the plants are dormant and I don't like to touch them in winter because they are weak and I've lost, when I came to, until I got familiar with the weather in California, there is no winter so I was just turning left and right because I didn't realize that the plants in winter are more vulnerable and you don't touch them, so, in winter unless I must, I don't touch my plant, that's why I dry them, I cut them, like right now this is the month of October, it's the month that I dry everything, in a couple of months you come back and all this, all of them, many of them are going to

be the bare twigs and then in the spring they come back, around May, I trim again, so I have to harvest of my plants, so that we have so many plants in store, sometimes the person needs to take plants, I do the same thing, if not, we have them cut, and we tell them how to re-hydrate a bit

MJ: so, ??? ???

S12: Yeah, many of them, for example the cotton are going to be, is going to be trimmed almost to the root, all the medicinal plants are going to be trimmed almost to nothing, this one, the sweet herb is going to be gone completely to the height of the rim of that, so it is going to be completely gone, so it's a way of getting rid of strong plants, and many of these plants are really old, you have to realize that many of these plants are more than 8 years old and they just keep coming back so you know, in that sense that is what keeps them, we keep treating them and bringing them back, so rue (ruda) is good for gastritis, menstruation ailments, female problems, it's very powerful like I said before, you don't give it to pregnant women because it can induce labor, actually it's the folk remedy for abortion and actually there is a joke in the Islands when a young lady is getting to out there with the boyfriend, that's a candidate for 'rue tea' (te de ruda), means that she will get pregnant and will take the tea to get rid of the baby, so when everyone says that we know that the girl is just getting to much out there with the boyfriend.

MJ: In every case used as a tea?

S12: It could be used as tea, you know, many of these plants you can added as a poultice, many of them you can combine them as poultice, you know what I mean, it's good for many things and they are good, for example if you see inflammation external or internal, if it is external you going to use a poultice, if it's muscular pain or whatever, sometimes you can not give a tea because it's very problematic because of the conditions of the person so you might as well start applying it over the skin and then you have to do a very lengthy treatment, ok, so many times you use both, you can use both either as treatment or as a bath, like a tub bath, you can boil it added to a tub and have the person sit on that hot bath with those plants, with the juice of the plants just being integrated, so you get it to osmosis to the skin, if you want to go a poultice then you do it like that

MJ: When you prepare material for a poultice, how much of the plant, how much of the leaves do you use for a typical poultice?

S12: Well it depends how fresh the plant is, if you get it fresh from the tree, of course you are going to have a higher yield of the chlorophyll and the elements, so you don't need that much. So usually my ration is 3 to 1, in other words, for every leaf that you use fresh you have to use 3 of the dry one because you are losing a lot of stuff when you dry, even when you dry it properly, when you re-hydrate you lose a lot of strength, that's the problem with dry leaves, that you lose a lot, so, that's why I try not to use dry leaves, but if I have no choice then I use them, but let me show you the plants that we have here so you can see what I'm talking about, you can see the color…

MJ: the dry ones?

S12: Yeah, I can bring them over…Look at this color. See what I'm talking about, these leaves are dry, they've been harvested in such a way and dried with the cut part facing up so that dry like this. So you see, it dries green. It's different from this one [leaves that have dried up and died on a potted plant]. See the difference? This is dried up, it's useless. This one [that HE has dried], is very soft to the touch they don't break because they are not brittle at all, they don't break. This one [picking up the dead leaf] will break very easy, because there's no water, no chlorophyll.

This is the part that's used [the ones he has dried]], for remedies and poultices and so. . . .

MJ: How much of that would you use for a poultice?

S12: Only about this amount [holds up three or four sprigs]. Then what I do is re-hydrate it in alcohol so I don't have to throw the water away. Because if you throw away the water, there's some exchange that takes place when it re-hydrates, so if you throw the liquid away you're throwing away—something's going in the liquid that you're throwing away. These leaves are very fresh too, they're not moldy at all [he picks leaves out of a sealed plastic bag]. See. That's very pliable. You can re-hydrate them easily. So we use the Ziplock—thank God for these—we open holes in the bag to let them breathe; otherwise they'll get moldy. So we open holes all over the place and they breathe.

The plants that you but in the store, they keep them under the sun, so they get dry, sometimes they are harvested and dried in the sun because you want them out, you want to keep the production, so what you get in the store is really, really straw—there's nothing there--but it's easier to acquire, that's one of the things I like about 'Yerbas de Mexico'[brand name] because their plants have this same quality that I'm used to, so when I don't have anything, certain things I don't keep because I have, so there is no sense of double storage, so you know. Usually the traditional Mexican fare that they have, (Borraja) and all those plants, they have them and they are very good conditions so why bother. I try to concentrate more on the harder to find Caribbean ones, those are the one I like to deal with

MJ: That little leaf you gave me a sample of, it's really flavorful. What is it?

S12: That's 'penny-royal' (poleo) and if you notice as soon as you taste it, it's wonderful thataway way ,but you know we are lucky because we have a basement, so we can dry in the basement and it's dry and it's out of the sun but it's airy because it's open, the air comes in and out, so that helps a lot, when they are there we take them out and then [my wife] will cut them smaller and then start packing them so you know, that's her territory. When I need anything there I just ask her because you know how women are, she knows where everything is, I just prescribe, I just work here

MJ: Why is ruda used in spiritual activities also [along with medicinal]?

S12: Well remember we talked about sweet and strong plants, so rue (ruda) is a strong plant and usually (ruda) is the rule that you take for that type of partition, rue and basil. If a plant has the same aroma and the same type of sweet aroma that you can compare with basil, it's a sweet plant, if you have a pungent aroma just like rue does, it's a strong plants, so those are the rule plants, the plants that make the rule, so any plant that is just

scandalous smell, that smells just like rue by the rule of thumb it becomes a strong plant. Sometimes the plant can be strong and sweet depending on what you pair it with, OK, sometimes if you pair it with certain elements the plant can be used, it is very mild the way you use it, it almost becomes a sweet plant.

MJ: Can you give me an example?

Vencedor is an example of that, it's a strong tree with very powerful properties however the smell is very sweet, so you know, with plants you have to increase it's potency by adding all the strong plants to make it stronger, whereas like rue you don't have to do anything to increase potency it's like that, also many of these plants medicinal and ritual purposes and that is another category that you have to deal with some of them can be used for baths, or cleansings or beautification but some plants can be both for example Rue or Basil that have both medicinal and ritual purposes, see, that's that's how it deals with, so when I was learning about these plants I always had the problem of how to know what is what, I was told that if it smelled like basil it's a sweet plant and if it stinks like rue it's a strong plant and you cant go wrong with that but there are certain exceptions, like everything, like this particular tree, 'sky blue' that the aroma is sweet, not overly sweet, it's almost pungent but not that much and then you have it there

MJ: What would you have to pair with that plant in order to make it stronger?

S12: Then you go to a true strong one, for example you can go to rue, you can go to epazote or pazote which is a strong plant, oh yes it is!, it's interesting that you go by the smell, see the smell is usually the rule, this type of plant, there are certain plants that you touch them and…for example Lavender, you touch it and it's a sweet very comforting aroma, that's a sweet plant, but you go by rue and you touch it you just want to run out of there, it don't like it, I use it but I don't like it, I'm biased against it, it stinks! But there are certain details that you go buy, so that's why you see the herbalist or people that have that whatever they find a plant, they will nip the tip of the leaf and crush it and smell it, if they are not sure about it they will taste it that's the whole idea, you can see that if you go to a forest or something, or to a wild area and you don't know what is it, you haven't seen it, then you nip a leaf and you smell it, you try to determine in what category you going to put it so it's a very (feel?) right way of getting to the plant and if you are not sure the next thing is to chew on it, if you are still not sure then you peel the bark of the trunk and that is your ultimate because the bark will release the true essence of the plant and then that will…for example you go like this and with your fingernail you peel a little bit and you smell your…and that's how you do it

MJ: What if that branch is poisonous? Are you able to tell?

S12: Well that's a problem you know, right now I always say that and I was talking about this with my god children that the first act of resistance of the Africans was an act of scholarship because they had to do two things, first tolerate the religion of their master and translate all the herbal knowledge from Africa into the Caribbean and by example, do you know how many people develop diarrhea, poisoning, all kind of allergic reactions just testing those plants to see what works and what doesn't, just think about it, these people are just seeing all these wonderful plants that look like they can be used for something, so you know how many people get poisoned and rashes and all kinds of

horrendous reactions just trying to test what is it, especially in the Caribbean which is just so luscious that is almost anything is potentially problematic so in that sense you learn, but in my case when I'm in California, when I came to California the first time I used the big long walks in Azusa and the Angeles forest, that was my problem, if I'm not sure I will taste it, I will go and the traditional smell about it and try to play with it and see what's up and don't go beyond that because how do you know, but it's different know because you can walk almost any book store and get a book on native plants of any place you want, except if you don't read English…then you go like YYYY (S11) said in his interview, which was a jewel when he said that he learned about the Mexican plants from the Mexicans themselves when they used to go for the Botanica and ask him for the plant and he would ask what its good for, so he got educated by his own clientele on what herbs to have and what to reject, so he got an education from the other side of the counter, pertaining Mexican medicinal plant that he had no idea when he came to California, so there is always an exchange, people who like plants, I have a lady who came here and got me a plant of Rue, Mexican…no Mexican 'penny royal' (poleo), that was it, so we have 'penny royal' (poleo) from the Caribbean that she did not have and she had Mexican 'penny royal' (poleo) which I did not have, so we swapped plants, I gave her a plant from my garden and she took another one and she gave me that, so now we have both, so this is exchange of plants, I don't sell plants you know, but I have many people who have gardens and my rule is, if you have something I don't have I give you one and you give me one and we swap plants like that

MJ: 'penny royal' (poleo), what is that?

S12: 'penny royal' (poleo) is a plant that we talked about last time, it's good for upset stomach, indigestion it's a new…it's the one I told you my mother used to give me with salt and sugar that I hated with a passion, that's 'penny royal' (poleo)

MJ: There's one Mexican, there's one Puerto Rican, do they have different effects?

S12: Well apparently it does even though they have the same use but I find the Mexican one to be sweeter and gentler than the Caribbean variety, the Caribbean variety is wilder it's wild and this one is very gentle so the use is the same thing, except that the Mexican variety is very gentle and it looks completely different and it could fool me, that's the 'penny royal' (poleo) plant right there growing, I have a little twig right there, the long one, that's 'penny royal' (poleo), the very long one that's 'penny royal' (poleo) and it has a purple flower, now the Mexican variety…if you could move this way, careful with that…see they don't look the same, I mean they could fool me, smell this thing. So I wanted if it's poleo just by a strange way of naming things

MJ: Even though they have the same name, are you a hundred percent sure that they are the same plant?

S12: Well, I'm not that's why keep sticking to the known ones, but I have it, I have it, but she uses it for stomach problems, so I'm going by what she told me

MJ: You haven't used it?

S12: No, I haven't, I haven't because it's an oddity for me, some people collect stamps some people collect coins, I collect plants

MJ: You also have harvested plants in vacant lots and along the curb as well, can you recall some of those plants that you harvest that way?

S12: Well, there are many of them, well I don't do that that much, because I have it here but sometimes, basically people in the Lucumí tradition and I guess anyone who deals with healing plants, they don't have the blessing of a garden or a place to grow it, you are always canvassing, you know when I'm driving to see what's what, and usually if I'm driving and we need then there it is, so you canvass your area, because sometimes you don't grow something but it grows wild, my problem with doing that is that, that this type of plants are problematic because you don't know what dog did his stuff on top of it, you know what I mean, and those are…I have a problem with that, it's different when you go to a forest or to a wooded area, but on the sidewalk you don't know who did what, so I'm really suspicious of it when it comes to use those, oh yes!, because you have to wash and wash, because you don't know who did whatever, so of course there are areas that are wild, were it is very unlikely where people will do whatever but yes, for example one of the plants you find all over is 'argentaine' the one that is good for cancer, that actually grows wild all over the place, you can find that almost anywhere, you can find the fruit bearing tree, you can find some of the medicinal plant like mint, that you scroll over the place, but I'm always very careful, I just don't…that's the reason that we have our own plants, because you don't know who did anything there, it's very dangerous, at this time, the way that plants grow in the city is very dangerous to use for internal things, you don't know, what if someone dumped all kind of stuff there and the plant is thriving there, the plants here are only cut by me and some occasion by [his wife], they only know my hand, I don't use any chemicals or weird stuff, so what you see is what you get, so nobody is dumping things, nobody is peeing on the plants…(laughter)

MJ: Argentaine is a yellowish flower, right?

S12: It has like a stem, a long stem that, is the one that is very invasive that I showed you right there, that's the lantana.

MJ: And that's used for cancer, you mean the scars…

S12: The scars, it helps people get over the ill things that they feel after chemo it's very good, drank as a tea, as a cup of water, you boil it, put in the refrigerator and drink it every day, you drink water, you drink as much as that, like I told you last time, the problem with plants is that they are slower because you have to saturate the body, that's why it takes longer if you take herbal remedies than chemical remedies, because one application of an anti biotic will take care of a lot of business right there, you know, and you will have to wait like a week to start seeing something, see that's the difference, so you have to saturate the body because you are using the raw stuff, probably the same medication works…has the same ingredients but it's been synthesized in such a way that it has an active ingredient that just go strait, but in this case your going with a plant, for example, with a plant, like a plant 'sage' (salvia), the sage that is very good for headaches and very good for cold, but chest colds and stuff like that, well that plant you apply it with coffee grounds as a poultice, coffee grounds after you boil…after you brew the

coffee, those grounds. In the Caribbean you always have people keeping the coffee grounds until they brew the next batch, because you never know, see what I mean, so, and then the cold is a messed up thing, then they take those coffee grounds that are warm from the coffee with 'sage' (salvia) applied for headaches and then put the thing, so you have, so the heat of the coffee grounds will help, but still the leaf, so whatever the ground have will just get [in] also, so it's transdermal, it goes across the skin, so you have to wait it's not the same like taking an aspirin, but you know, when you don't have money for the aspirin as we used to have when I was growing up, well, that's it.

MJ: Why is sage as a cleansing?

S12: Sage is strong. It's a strong plant, so it's used to purify places, it chases bad spirits away and bad vibrations and all kind of things that go bump. Chase them away.

MJ: So if you want to chase away bad spirits then you use a strong plant?

S12: Oh, absolutely, the rule is that "strong plants dispel and sweet plants compel," so you will do the double wammer, you will use the strong plant and then use the sweet plant, the strong to dispel and the sweet to bring in and you go by name 'sage' (salvia) from the Spanish 'to save', 'to be safe from' You know what I mean, and 'rue' (ruda) is also another type of ironical name because if you stretch the name, something or someone who is 'rude' is someone who is coarse, strong, almost rustic, you know, untamed, so the name is usually a pun of what it does, so if you know the plant name, you know what it's good for. And if you don't know the plant name then you have to put it in that category, it's a strong, it's a sweet….

MJ: OK, what about Caña fistola?

S12: (Caña fistola) and then in the Caribbean (Caña fistola), instead of the 'o' it is a 'u'. That's the treatment for diarrhea, fever, especially in kids, you know, colics, very, very good plant, problems created by, well, right now it's not that much but when I was growing up you had a lot of natural wells and sometimes if the well wasn't cleansed enough…in here I've seen one, but its', well usually in the islands in Puerto Rico, wells used to be like holes that were dug in the ground and they will empty it to wash out all the stagnant work, if a well wasn't cleansed properly and the water stayed there for a long time you could get all kind of nasty bugs, especially kids, especially if you drink it without boiling it and usually…you used to get that water and keep there in cans and stuff, so it was staying there twice, once in the well once in the house, so all that got kids with diarrhea and dysentery and really bad, so (caña fistola) is a tree and it's fixed, it's a pod that is round and can usually reach about a foot long, it's really long and has a round seed like with a powdery substance around it that it will really smell bad and that's what we use, the pod the seed.

MJ: How do you use it?

S12: You use it as a tea, you drink it as a cup of water and that's what you use the pod and that's what you get here, but the tree is a full tree, and the seed it looks…you know those checker pieces that you use to play? Well, just that thickness but smaller, probably

a little bit smaller than a penny but that thickness so you have a long pod full of those in a very nice line and very tight, that's (caña fistola) and it's a Caribbean thing

MJ: Do you use it fresh or do you use it dry?

S12: It does not matter because you can only open the pod when it's mature, so the pod turns black, that's when it's ripe, and then you can study for ever because it just never goes wrong because you can just cut them and keep them, it's like orange peel that many people use to take the orange peel and keep it hanging in the kitchen, so when they needed it, or certain things to make, or lemon peel, to make teas for colds or to season stuff, you know, my mother would keep all those peels, look like a curtain in the window, in the kitchen window and then just take it from there whatever she had to do, the cooking for confections and during Christmas and stuff like that, so these are the types of things that people will have water to just hang and stuff there, but the tree is all over the place and you don't have to worry, you can…10 of them all over the place so you never run out of that, so that's one of the examples, this is look like a Tamarind tree, have you seen a tamarind tree?

MJ: No.

S12: I haven't seen anything around here that I can compare it with, oh yeah, you know those Jacaranda trees that are at UCLA? That type of leaf but bigger and they don't grow that tall, about 7 feet tall, that's about it

MJ: Do you know anything about jade? For spiritual uses?

S12: Yeah, I have it here, right here…right here…that's 'Jade'

MJ: Do you use this for anything?

S12: Not really. Oh, well, yes! For, to prepare, for Lucumí when you prepare the omiero, which is the herbal preparation for consecration, so Lucumí people use this, that's about it. I guess in that sense that's what people call spiritual uses, but this plant I came to know it when I came to America, I had never seen it, when I was back home, but I know that it's very much used

MJ: If you never saw it before you came here, how did you start you using it in the ceremony?

S12: Well, people who were here longer than me, the Lucumí priests that were here longer than me started to use it and it became established as a plant that can be used and I grow it and it's there but I don't know that much about it, I haven't seen what it is good for, for certain ceremonies especially Babalú Aye they put it there.

MJ: How do they put it there, what part of the plant?

S12: The leaf, it's a succulent, so you have to break the leaf and it's a very meaty type of leaf, so people use it here, I don't use it that much, I keep it because some people ask for it, but I just don't use it that much myself, I use it a couple of times myself, I don't need

to I have enough leaves to pick and chose so, I don't need to, probably they do that because it's a succulent and some of the Babalú Aye plants, the important plants that are used for Babalú Aye are succulents, so probably because it's a succulent it just, it's a easy, it was acquired by the Babalú Aye ceremonies, just by that fact that it is succulent

MJ: You suppose it's an addition or a substitution of another plant?

S12: Probably a substitution, because certain succulents that are used for Babalua are not found here, so that's probably what it is and in many cases it can be both, maybe people have it and since everyone is using it, you know monkey see monkey do, everyone is using it, why not, but I think that the Lucumí committee here is about 25-30 years old at most, so they have to really find many of the plants uses until it was able to establish the plants that were needed for the ceremony, still many of the plants come from out of state they come from Florida

MJ: ????

S12: Yes, shipped overnight. So still many, when you are doing serious work, those plants that you cannot get, you ask…you send from Florida. Papaya is great for digestion, you know, we deal a lot of that because it's very good to aid, for digestion, for digestion problems, if you have problems digesting the food because it helps you, it helps the stomach to digest easier without that much problem, the fruit especially

MJ: How do you prepare it?

S12: In juices, in shakes, fresh, just serve it, but the fastest way to make a fruit into a juice and then you drink it after you have eaten and then…it's like adding an element to help the stomach, especially people with ulcers, that you don't want them to keep a long digestion which…you don't want that you want to fast that, because you can exacerbate ulcers, so the faster the digestion gets done, usually in conjunction with aloe vera, so you use both of those, to cover and help the digestion so the stomach ulcers don't get exacerbated that's very important. Some people use the leaf and the leaves are problematic because the leaf you have to be very careful because the liquid from the leaf can be very…it can create problems so you have to let the leaf bleed before you can use it, but I don't like to use that leaf, I know that it's used but I stick to the fruit I just don't go beyond that, the reason is that we develop a tolerance for certain things, in the Island for using it all your life, you develop a tolerance so what ever doesn't affect me, well I have been doing it, I'm 48, you figure out that at this time it hasn't killed me, it won't, but if you get a person that is not used to is and you just go and say take this, if there is no tolerance for it, the remedy could be worse that then disease, you know what I mean, so that's one thing we are careful with and…yeah…if it doesn't work it's better to have mild reactions than messed up ones

MJ: So are any of these plants that we are talking about now considered strong?

S12: Well, ruda is strong, caña fistola is strong, jade will be strong, papaya will be a strong plant, 'bamboo' is strong even though that it says here that it's used for tonic and to treat dysentery and for fevers…'Salvia' yes, I agree with…we talked about that, for headaches, spasms, muscular spasms, cold, that's the one I told you about the coffee

grounds and stuff, cola de caballo (shave grass) is very good, kidney problems, kidney stones, it's a diuretic, mal de orin is when a person tries to urinate and there is an inflammation of the bladder and can not do it, so cola de caballo taken as a tea helps ease that, especially in kids, so for bladder problems, so mal de orin is a bladder problem, and it's very popular, you see it in every Chinese garden and restaurant all over the place, have you seen it? you've seen it, here let me show it to you

MJ: ????

S12: Yeah I do. It's around here, it's hiding

MJ: It's a water plant…

S12: Yes, it's a long green slender stalk, here it is, you have to praise its vain, it's a vain…so it's used for water garden and decorations, see what I mean, she is vain, you have to say that…you boil it and then you drink the water as common water, whenever you want to drink you drink because it is a diuretic, but as you can see, here you can see hedges and plants…so people who don't have it, you always figure out who has the water garden and you go snatch it, especially the government likes to put that in ponds around towns and stuff like that, it's very common, the government is saving us from having to grow it

MJ: ???

S12: You see I could not find it so I had to say nice things about it, I couldn't see it, I knew it was there, I go there to do this, even though it's darker than the rest of the green, I couldn't see it, plants sometimes are very tricky they have their own rules, you have to be able to entertain them otherwise you cant get them

MJ: ???

S12: Huamuchil.

MJ: Yes.

S12: I don't have the slightest idea, see that's why I wanted to go to this garden, because we might know the same plant with a different name, see what I was telling you about going to Cuba, many of the plants have different name, for example this one the Vicaria the one that I use for diabetic…so we know it as Playera in Puerto Rico, Cubans know it as 'Vicaria' and they were talking about it and I did not know what it was and I happen to be growing it and someone said, you have Vicaria, and oh okay. Like Yerba Luisa I don't know what it was until I realized it was Lemon Verbena so they say this…oh you know that tea I prepared for you this summer, it's called yerba luisa, verbena morada in Puerto Rico and lemon verbena' in English so I did not know, so, when you leave your home town you have to become almost a polyglot, the gift of tongue, to know so many names, a long list of names, and the more names you know the better it is for you to work, the other day I was doing a healing to a lady and she asked the name for pumpkin and in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Cuba it's 'calabasa' but in Venezuela they call it 'Auyoma' (sp.??) and in Central America it's called 'Ayote' so we went through the whole list

and…and she said oh yeah I know what 'ayote' is, finally, so you really have to have a gift for tongues, the way that it's developing in so many languages, so who knows I might know it by another name, I don't know

MJ: ???

S12: This one, Vicaria

MJ: ???

S12: Yeah the flower, you wash the eyes, what people have inside associated with…

MJ: And Bamboo, have you …

S12: No, I don't do anything, I never knew…I would love to know how he uses it, because it could be either the leaves or the young growth, it would have to be one of those two things, I would love to know what he uses

MJ: And …

S12: 'Nispero' [loquat] is a fruit, I know that it's a fruit, I love it, it's great, I know it just as a fruit, but I don't have any other uses for it. Chayote (vegetable pear) yes, for diabetes, and also as a diuretic, people with water retention problems, you know Chayote, cucumber, lettuce, all those are natural diuretics

MJ: ???

S12: Oh, you can do all kinds of stuff with it, you can boil it and in salad, you can boil it and do it with water, there is 20 million recipes that is very good, Chayote is squash, yeah. So, for example [my wife] prepares the…she scoops out the meat from the fruit, stir fry it and add it with other ingredients like meat and stuff like that put it back in the fruit and then put cheese and then you put it in the oven, so good.

Oh, chayote (vegetable pear) is very good, you can, I like to eat it with just oil, just you know, boil it and get it out of the pot and drizzle oil and start to eat it, it's absolutely great, it's very watery, so it's a good diuretic, along with cucumber and lettuce

MJ: Do you agree with him [S2], that it's used for high blood pressure?

S12: Well never heard of it, that's a new one, I knew that for diabetes yes, as natural diuretic, yes, but not high blood pressure

MJ: Almost out of time on this tape, I'm going to stop on this tape

S12: OK

SIDE 2

S12: Ginger is good for colds, it's a hot plant, when you have those very bad chest colds and head colds, then you use it along with lemon, and you have fevers, those internal fevers that don't want to come out? then you make it as a tea and it will bring out the fever and then you rub the person, and have them sweat, and the temperature will go down immediately. A tea with ginger, lemon, and cinnamon, very hot components, so it will force the fever out, internal fever, it will force it out immediately, which is one of the main problems when you have the flu, that the fever is internal, so you just give the person that tea and then rap it with a very thick blanket and it will sweat like there is no tomorrow and immediately the fever comes down, so it's very good

MJ: The root?

S12: Yes, of course the more you eat, Ginger is a type of thing that you could eat forever and it will do you no bad, anyway you want it, you can use it in tea, you can use it with juices, with cooking, whatever but it has always this ability to raise the temperature, and that's what you want when you have internal fever, you want to raise the temperature to force it out, to force the person to seat, to open all the pores of the body and then you put it together with cinnamon which is absolutely hot, those two really get you sweating in no time and for colds, that's exactly what you want you want to raise the body temperature and you want to make the person sweat, profuse sweating and that will get to you

MJ: Are there any hot plants that we've talked about before

S12: Hot plants, like salvia (sage) is hot, ruda (rue) is hot, camphor is hot

MJ: So not only strong but also hot?

S12: Usually yeah, but not all the time, but these are very hot plants, they are hot

MJ: And are there cold plants?

S12: Yes, mango, remember we talked about he shadows, mango, all the citric trees are cold, when it comes to the shadow, even though when you want…if we take ginger and whatchamacallit…cinnamon, you put lemon because you want to keep, you know, a balance there, lemon juice to…

MJ: Moderate it

S12: yes, you have to, if you don't sometimes you don't have lemon and it goes straight, if you feel really rotten and you need to work and there is no lemon and that's the way it goes, you boil everything together and you hope for the best

MJ: So you boil the sap as a tea then?

S12: Yeah, and then you drink it hot

MJ: Lemon juice or lemon ??

S12: You dump the whole lemon in, you cut it and dump it there

MJ: and the cinnamon is it the stick?

S12: the stick

MJ: And how much of the stick in proportion to the lemon?

S12: Well you use one lemon you use one stick of cinnamon and you use one teaspoon of ginger, in a half a cup of water, very little, because you don't want to let it sit there. You want to boil it and give it to the person and then wrap it and let just go to bed, make them sleep immediately and then they will start sweating, sweating and then after that you just take a nap, change everything and then leave the person to rest, that's a standard cold remedy, everyone knows that. You're not from the Caribbean but when you finish this project, Jones, I'm going to give you a diploma

MJ: Now, when you say a teaspoon of ginger, does that mean you can grate it?

S12: You can grate it or dice it and then…usually you don't have to that, I just know by my quantity, I just cut whatever I know is going to be in the pot and just boil everything there, you learn to go by eye, and then 'Corojo' is the Palm oil, it's used, it's a fruit, it's a spiny plant, it has spines all over the place, and the fruit is used to make palm oil

MJ: and how do you, how do you take it?

S12: In Brazil they cook with it and in Africa too, in West Africa it's the basic condiment, it's like, it's a lard like substance, 'Corojo' you cook with it, the problem with it is that it's one of the purest sources of vitamin E, but it's high in cholesterol, very high, total cholesterol blast, you know what I mean, but it's very good for the skin, cracked hands and stuff like that, but it's very red, people cook with it, in Jamaica they cook with it, it's a condiment, so studies show that it's high in vitamin E but it's high in cholesterol, so it depends if you don't have a cholesterol rich diet, I guess you can cook with it, it's like cooking with lard, pork lard and it's very red. 'Corojo', palm oil.

MJ: And 'igareta'?

S12: You know what 'igareta' is, it's the caster bean, the tree that produces the caster bean to make caster oil that everyone hates to take, that's what it is

MJ: So it's considered a laxative?

S12: It is a laxative because if you take that bean and you boil it or the leaf, it's a very pungent plant and it grows wild all over, that's the type of tree that I don't grow here because first it's huge and second I don't need to, if I need, I have certain places that I have and I go and get it and that's it, it grows wild, all over the place you can find it, so it's very pungent and you use it as a laxative

MJ: How do you extract the oil out of the bean?

S12: You boil them, and it will just flow to the surface…but of course this is an old remedy, why go through so much when you can go to a pharmacy and for 75 cents you can get a whole tablet, it's like coconut oil, I love to get my own coconut oil, but it takes a long time to get coconut oil, you have to grate it you have to squeeze the milk and then you have to let it sit and then you skim the fat and then you boil it, and then you fry it on the frying pan and then you do 2 hours of that to get less that two tables spoons of it, not worth it, yeah it's much better than the commercial one, when you get coconut oil, the neighborhood knows because the it's fresh it's very aromatic it's very good especially if you are going to cook with it, if you are going to do any type of concoction you know it's better than the coconut flavor but you have to get your own oil and you get it and depending on how dark it is it depends on how it will give you the flavor. A light one will be very aromatic, but a burned one it's likey very strong. It's very good, coconut oil: you can use it for scalp treatment when people have problems with the scalp they…

That used to be the early thing that you used to comb your hair, it's very wonderful, I remember my grandmother, she was a very tall slender statuesque black woman and she will go by you and it's this coconut aroma, I can almost feel it now, it was her hair, she would use that to comb her hair, so of course she went by you and it was like this tropical muse that went across you that it was like so edible. So you know that was what she would use to comb her hair, every morning she would get a bunch of that and then comb her hair, she would got a lot of sheen and stuff like that and she…the last time I saw her she was 98, many years ago and she was still doing it, her coconut oil that is what she combs her hair with and it's just wonderful to sit by her because she envelopes you with her great aroma of coconut oil

For babies, for the skin coconut is very good, to alleviate constipation, coconut oil, it will lubricate the intestines, it's very very good and very fattening, it's extremely fattening, but when, when I was growing up you didn't have that much to eat, so who cares, that cactus going….

MJ: So you consider palm and the 'corojo' you consider them strong plants?

S12: 'Corojo' and 'igareta'?

MJ: Yes

S12: yes, they are strong plants, 'igareta' is hot and then you have 'golden button' (boton de oro) which is just a regular thing for cleansing, baths and stuff like that

MJ: Why would it be used, what's special about it?

S12: 'golden button' (boton de oro)?

MJ: It's associated with Oshun which is the goddess of beauty and love, money, wealth so it's a plant sacred to Oshun, so it's just used when you are using rituals and ceremonies dedicated to Oshun, so it's basically associated with Oshun, he probably got this one from the Afro-Cuban tradition because it's directly from Cuba, so you know it's

like ‘corojo’ it does not grow anywhere just in the Caribbean, so, of course in west Africa, but he’s growing it here on his rock

S12: A palm tree!

MJ: No, the ‘boton de oro’

S12: Oh, yeah, I’m talking about the Palm oil

MJ: Oh, I’m sorry, the ‘corojo’ grows only in the Caribbean

S12: Right, it’s a palm tree, but the ‘golden button’ (boton de oro) grows all over, remember that big tall, I cut it because it was invasive, the big tall plant with the little yellow flower that I showed you some time ago, that’s the ‘golden button’ (boton de oro), it’s very soft and the leaf is very velvety, and it’s done for ??

MJ: That black nut, ‘Nogal’?

S12: ‘Nogal Negro’ (black walnut) I don’t know what it is, I don’t know
MJ: Alright, ?? ‘Alcanfor’ (camphor)

S12: Yes this is where the camphor, you cut the bark and the crystal that comes out that is what creates the camphor but instead of doing that the leaf has the same properties, so you boil it and you make like an infusion to infuse the air, ‘Papaya’ we already talked about for ailments and stuff like that, bergamot is very good to freshen stale air, you know, especially when there are sick people, that usually if you don’t want drafts to come into the room, so you close the room so the air gets very stale, so then you use bergamot and it will just freshen the air, basically, so it’s also good to drink in teas, for bread…it’s very aromatic too, it’s a sweet herb, and vicaria which is the playera the flower is the only thing I use and then you make an infusion with the flowers and then you wash the eyes when people are having eye problems due to diabetes, complications or all that kind of trouble with the eyes, then we wash it

MJ: remind me what an infusion is first

S12: For an infusion, you boil the water and then you put it over the leaf or whatever you are using and whatever you get out and you leave it for a couple of seconds, and whatever you get out on the first, that’s what it is, a tea normally you just boil it and let it sit, whatever you get out in the first, two or three seconds or five seconds, that’s what you got and that’s what you get, because you do that and you don’t want the full strength of the plant, you want to keep the level very low, it’s easier, so you don’t let it sit, you put it in, scoop it out and that liquid, that’s what you get and lemon Verbena, called yerba luisa in Cuba, which is very good also, all these plants, yerba luisa, lemon verbena, orosún are good for upset stomach too and I just discovered that if you mix them together also, you can use it for…to bring down and relax the person and to bring down the temperature when you are really hot, and it’s very good in that sense,

Rosemary is used as an astringent, scalp problems basically, people who are losing their hair, it will make the hair shinier, it’s very good, so people use it as a shampoo, so people

use it as a shampoo, they wash their hair with that and it will help the scalp get rid of all kinds of problems, it's very good.

Romerillo [for diabetes], I grow it here, it's from the Caribbean, it's a pretty plant, it's a weed really, that's what it is and it's good, lots of sugar, it helps control sugar level, but what makes a weed and not, usually, weed is anything you don't decide not to grow, so if you don't have a garden everything is a weed, it's just some plants you treat with more care than others and those are not weeds, those are the one that prevent you from growing the ones you want, so if you don't care about it that's a weed, so romerillo no one grows it in the Island because it's…

MJ: Grows all over town

S12: But here I have it, here it's a plant because you don't get it anywhere else, I have to take care of it, it's very good in teas to bring down the sugar levels, but the problem is you have to drink it every day, it's like you drink it like normal water, you drink it every day, you boil a bunch of it and you keep it and you keep drinking it and drinking it, that's how you do it and then spearmint for bad breath and also it's very good for the nerves, to sooth the nerves and help people with gum problems and help people with tooth decay, especially with kids, you know, it has some kind of…I notice that when I leave spearmint in water, in a particular metal container, that you never use when you deal with plants you don't use metal, but sometimes you forget and you use it and you see a ring it cleans the metal, it has some kind of acid, it's very cool, because if it does that to metal you can imagine what it does to you when it gets in you, it like squash down whatever, so I think that's what it does with the tea, it just scrubs whatever, especially if you do it with 'clove', clove is a very hot element, along the same level as cinnamon and ginger, they work as a trio and of course if you mix, clove, cinnamon and ginger and the whole thing, what you get is a great air infuser, it's just very sweet it smells very homey and the Caribbean sage for asthma, chest cold, head cold, problems with the headaches also, along with coffee grounds and you know, respiratory problems as a whole…

MJ: So the coffee grounds would be a poultice?

S12: For headaches

MJ: And the others would be teas?

S12: You can apply the leaf on it's own, just the leaf you know, it's hot, the salvia is hot, so when you apply it to the sole of the feet and then you put like socks and then you can apply it as a poultice or a tea, as a poultice on the chest or stuff like that, you can't come out in the open because it will give you muscle spasms, so once you use salvia you can come out, and you can't be barefooted, you have to be clothed, usually we use it at night, when we know that you are not going to get up at all, so you go to bed and you stay there, so…

MJ: When you say, use a leaf, you mean just use a whole leaf?

S12: The whole leaf and you apply it.

MJ: Without changing it in any way?

S12: In any way until the next day and then the exchange of the body heat and the leaf, then the next day you throw it away, OK. So we did it.

MJ: we did it, thank you.

TAPE ENDS